



DESTINATION FAR ROCKAWAY!

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DFR ARTIST COMMISSIONING PROG.

MEET THE DFR ARTIST



QCA QUEENS COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

PROJECT SUMMARY

Destination Far Rockaway! is focused on transforming this once vibrant community filled with pristine shops, services, abundance of arts, culture back into Downtown Far Rockaway. To achieve this, we must create a safer district for our visitors, shoppers, and business owners alike to extend the shopping and dining day from 6:00-6:30pm to 8:00-8:30pm. This can be achieved by continuing to improve our existing storefronts with smartly designed facades including new signage, exterior lighting, and mesh rolldown gates that allows ambient light, and for shoppers to window shop during closed hours. Second, by transforming the rows of dreary solid rolldown gates into works of art created by local artists and admired by curious on lookers. Third, by infusing events and activities focused on music, arts and culture that will encourage the over 30 restaurants to remain open later after attending a concert or show at one of the public plazas, or at the Rockaways Music, Arts and Culture Center. Finally, we know that people must stay connected to family, friends, news, and information always with the installation of a high-speed, secured Wi-Fi network will satisfy this need.

Highlights of our \$2.55M **Destination Far Rockaway!** project proposal include:

- \$1.5M restoration of the old O’Kane building located in the heart of Downtown Far Rockaway into Rockaways Center for Media, Arts and Culture (RMAC)
- \$200,000 investment for the installation of the Downtown Far Rockaway Public Wi-Fi Network
- \$550,000 investment for the Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Project Phase II
- \$200,000 investment for the purchase of 4 NYC DOT approved custom-built containers to be used to develop micro-business/pop-up shops located throughout downtown Far Rockaway
- \$50,000 investment for the Downtown Far Rockaway Mural Arts Project Phase III
- \$50,000 for the development of a comprehensive Far Rockaway Walking Guide and Interactive Map that can be downloaded to any Wi-Fi enabled device, including LINKNYC.

Each of the proposed NY Forward project element build upon each other – improving not only the physical appeal of existing storefronts and businesses but by concentrating on creating exciting, family focused events, activities centered around the music, arts culture.

We believe the time is right with almost \$1.5B in public-private investments in new affordable housing, 200,000+ square feet of new commercial space, public plazas, library, and infrastructure to establish Far Rockaway as the next great place to live, work and enjoy.

About Far Rockaway

Far Rockaway is a small community located in the most southeastern area of the Rockaway peninsula (Queens). There are approximately 65,000 thousand residents that live in Far Rockaway, including a large percentage of Black and LatinX persons earning less than \$52,000 as evidenced by the six Federally certified Opportunity Zones. The Rockaway peninsula plus Broad Channel, are collectively referred to as the Rockaways and is represented locally by Queens Community Board 14.

Due to its geographical isolation from the rest of Queens and New York City, Far Rockaway has downtown characteristics similarly found in smaller villages and hamlets located throughout Long Island and upstate New York. This includes local merchants being heavily dependent on local shoppers that prefer to conveniently drive and park in downtown Far Rockaway.



Figure 1: Map of Rockaway Peninsula & Broad Channel

Downtown Far Rockaway Boundary Description

Downtown Far Rockaway consists of 23 blocks with three major roads - Mott Avenue, Beach 20th Street and Central Avenue. The geographical boundaries of Downtown Far Rockaway are:

- Central Avenue from Nameoke Avenue to Mott Avenue
- Beach 20th Street from Mott Avenue to New Haven Avenue

- Mott Avenue from Cornaga Avenue to Beach Channel Drive
- Cornaga Avenue from Mott Avenue to Beach 22nd Street
- Beach 19th, 21st and 22nd Streets between Mott Avenue and Cornaga Avenues

Beach 20th Street is a one-way street that is the primary road for emergency vehicles to access St. John's Episcopal Hospital. Beach 20th Street has been narrowed to include a dedicated bicycle lane and parking on the west side of the street. Central Avenue is a two-way street that is the main road from Highway 878 into downtown Far Rockaway. Mott Avenue is a two-way street that includes several bus stops, and Mott Avenue A-Train Station.

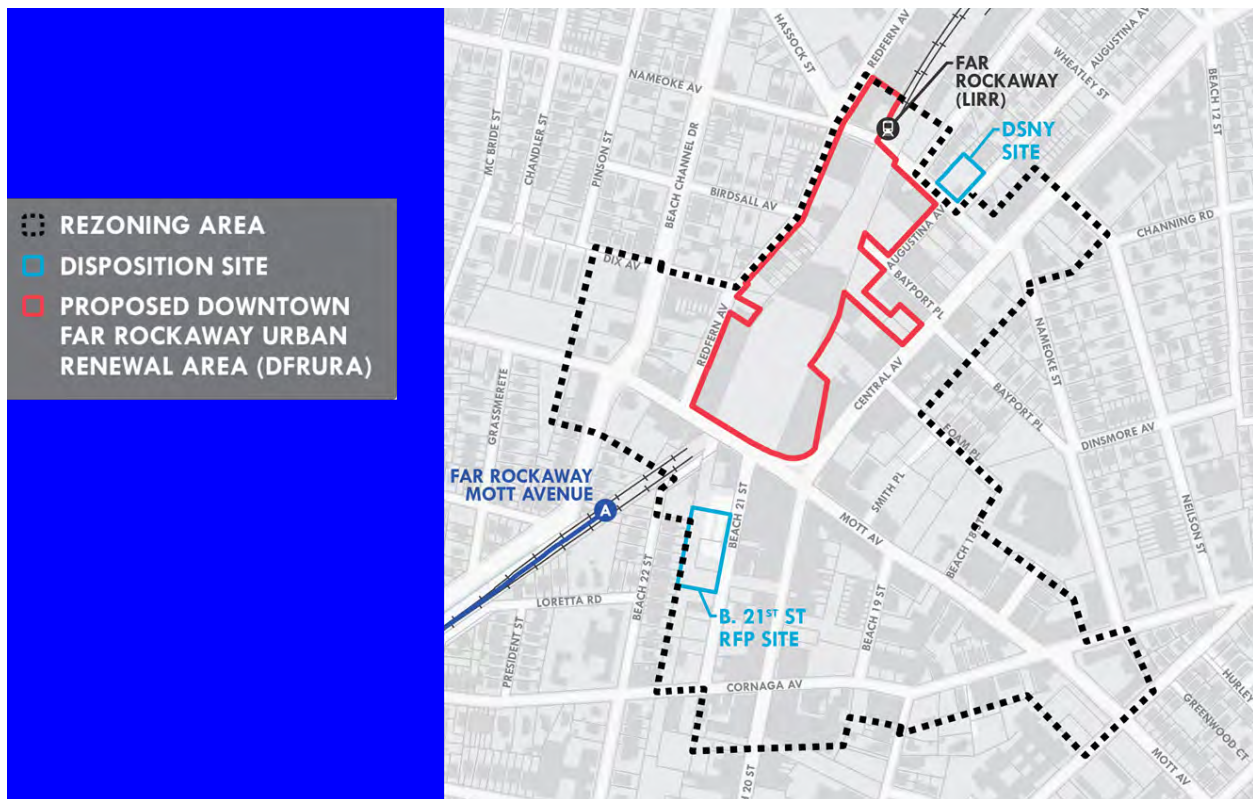


Figure 2: Map of Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District

Key Transportation Characteristics

Downtown Far Rockaway plays a pivotal role as the Rockaways main transit hub that includes A-Train/Far Rockaway Line; bus - Q22, Q22 Express, Q113, Q114, N31, N32; and LIRR Far Rockaway Branch. Downtown Far Rockaway is located less than one mile from the only land-based entry/exit point to the rest of the Rockaways for residential and commercial vehicles.

One of the characteristics revealed in our ***Downtown Far Rockaway Community District Needs Assessment*** and subsequent community meetings centered on lack of available parking within the downtown district due to the streetscapes redesign, ongoing construction and new affordable housing developments with limited onsite parking have resulted in the loss of consumers to neighboring areas such as Cedarhurst, Hewlett, Valley Stream (Nassau County) as well as other areas of Queens.

Summary of Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District Needs Assessment

Using Community Engagement, Data Collection, Street Observations & Feedback to Determine Needs – Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District Needs Assessment

At the request of RDRC, in 2017 the NYC Department of Small Business Services commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of the Downtown Far Rockaway commercial corridor to align its vision as the local development corporation serving Downtown Far Rockaway with the needs of local community stakeholders including business and property owners, residents, shoppers, and area workers.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY:

- ✓ Larger and more diverse retailers
- ✓ Arts, culture & entertainment
- ✓ Recreational spaces
- ✓ Quality clothing & stores
- ✓ Supermarkets & healthy food choices
- ✓ Full services/sit down restaurants

WHAT WE HEARD FROM BUSINESS OWNERS**The Challenges**

- ✓ Lack of parking/transit accessibility
- ✓ Crime/safety
- ✓ Commercial rent/lease

The Needs

- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Access to capital
- ✓ Space improvements
- ✓ Lease support
- ✓ New equipment
- ✓ Legal support
- ✓ Regulatory compliance support
- ✓ Training for staff

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE/MIX

- 342 Ground Level Storefronts
- 12% Vacancy Rate
- 79% Rent Space
- 41 Barbershops, Beauty Salons & Supply Stores
- 38 Medical Services
- 31 Limited-Service Restaurants

Downtown Far Rockaway Retail Opportunity

- Residents spend \$636M
- Local businesses earn \$247M
- 2018 Median Sales \$99,926
- \$361M in Retail Leakage

STOREFRONT CONDITIONS

Of the 342 Storefronts Assessed

- 33% in Poor Condition
- 50% in Average Condition
- 17% in Good Condition

Many of the physical conditions identified in the CDNA – damaged and non-ADA compliant sidewalks, lack of public space amenities such as street furniture, artwork, and active public spaces have been addressed through the DFR Streetscape Reconstruction Project and several NYC Small Business Services beautification, arts installation and public space activation projects undertaken by RDRC.

Downtown Far Rockaway Physical Characteristics

Downtown Far Rockaway is rich in history and architecture erected at the turn of the 20th century, includes:



Trinity Chapel, also known as St. John's Church and Beth-El Temple, is a historic Episcopal Church at 1874 Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway, Queens. It was built in 1858 to the design of noted architect Richard Upjohn. It is a frame Gothic Revival style chapel on a brick foundation with steeply pitched roof and sided in wood shingles. Atop the roof is a wooden belfry with steeply pitched pyramidal roof. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.



Far Rockaway Post Office - Built in 1935, the Far Rockaway Post Office is one of six post offices in New York State designed by architect Eric Kebbon. It is a two-story brick building with limestone trim and a low granite base in the Colonial Revival style. Its main facade features a centrally placed polygonal shaped frontispiece with a rounded dome inspired by Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. It also has a grand entrance vestibule. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.



Smith Building - The Smith Building is located on the northeast corner of Mott and Central Avenues, the two most prominent avenues in the neighborhood. The building dates to 1931 and is one of Downtown Far Rockaway's most distinguished buildings.



NYC 101st Police Precinct Building - Built in the 1920's with an Italian Renaissance Style.



Far Rockaway Bank Building - Located on the Central Avenue, it is a wedge-shaped marble Greek Revival building went up in 1912. The building is wedge-shaped to accommodate the former route of the Long Island Railroad, which adjoined its left side until the mid-1950s.

Downtown Far Rockaway Community Services

Downtown Far Rockaway is home to over 25 community-based organizations, schools vocational training schools offering social programs to youth, adults, and families:

- Training Schools - JMB Nursing, New York Career Training Schools, Tri-Med, Sam's Auto School

- Community-Based Organizations - Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, Queens Defenders, Jewish Community Council of Rockaway Peninsula, Urban Upbound, AIDS Center of Queens County, Far Rockaway-Arverne Non-Profit Coalition, Queens Library
- Workforce Services – Council for Airport Opportunity, Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, Urban Upbound
- Merchant Services - Rockaway East Merchants Association, RDRC
- Youth Services - RDRC, Queens Defenders, Queens Library Teen Library
- NYPD – 101st Precinct
- Far Rockaway Post Office
- FDNY – Engine 264, Engine 328, and Ladder 124
- Hospital – St. John’s Episcopal Hospital
- Community Health – Joseph P Addabbo Family Health Center
- Mental Health Services – New Horizons Counseling Center
- Recreation – Sorrentino Recreational Center

PUBLIC SUPPORT/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Plan included the creation of the DFR Working Group to work with City agencies and elected officials to provide feedback on the Plan’s design and features. The Working Group included the following social service organizations, faith-based institutions, merchants associations, civic associations and health care institutions: Bayswater Civic Association; Challenge Preparatory Charter School; Church of the Nazarene Far Rockaway; Deerfield Civic Association; Jewish Coordinating Council of the Rockaway Peninsula; Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center; New Horizons Counseling Centers; New York Police Department - 101st Precinct Community Council; Peninsula Preparatory Academy Charter School; Queens Defenders; Queens Library/Far Rockaway Branch; Queens Library/Far Rockaway Teen Library; Redfern Tenant’s Association; Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation; Rockaway East Merchants Association; Rock Safe Streets; St. John’s Episcopal Hospital ; St. Mary’s Star of The Sea, RC; and Urban Upbound.

The Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group will continue to participate as active stakeholders in the formation of the Downtown Far Rockaway Revitalization Local Planning Committee.



Rockaway Task Force for Racial Inclusion & Equity

In 2021, RDRC established a working group known as Rockaways TRIE to address many of the COVID-19 health disparities that included Far Rockaway being one of 33 neighborhoods Citywide designated as COVID hotspots that forced non-essential businesses to close for several months. Members conducted community outreach events, testing and vaccination campaigns, distributed information and supplies to local businesses – masks, gloves, sanitizer, and wipes to keep their employees and patrons safe. The members of TRIE – RDRC, Queens Defenders, Queens Public Library, Far Rockaway Greek Council and FRANC continue to provide not only information about COVID but have extended their services to include Participatory Budgeting, Ranked Choice Voting and other quality of life issues that impact our local businesses and overall economic health.

Rockaways Digital Inclusion Coalition

In 2022, RDRC launched a digital inclusion campaign to address the digital inequities that were made apparent during the height of the pandemic. The goal is to build a wide coalition that includes TRIE members as well as the 20+ members of FRANC to identify the challenges facing community-based organizations that provide a range of social, workforce, housing and family counseling services to low-income residents that do not have adequate access to Internet in the home, or equipment beyond a smartphone to access available services or training.

RDRC recently hosted a Community Organization Roundtable discussion that included over 50 cbo's, elected officials and city agencies, including the Commissioner of the Department of Youth & Community Development to discuss ways to address the digital inequities that also impacts many of our local businesses due to lack of stable Internet service in the business, limited equipment or ways to connect with consumers as they enter the district to promote their goods, services or products through a public Wi-Fi system.

RECENT OR IMPENDING JOB GROWTH

According to the Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District Needs Assessment, 57% of all jobs located in Downtown Far Rockaway were in the Education Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance. This number decreases to 33% when adjusted to include residents' employment.

With the development of new housing, larger and modern commercial-retail spaces RDRC predicts that there will be an increase in the number of jobs created in the retail/customer service, hospitality, and construction (temporary unskilled that could lead to additional skills training/permanent jobs) over the life of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project.

In anticipation of new businesses relocating or expanding (or existing businesses) into newly developed commercial or retail spaces, RDRC has partnered with the Council for Airport Opportunity to create a robust Customer Service/Retail Training Program certified by the National Retail Federation/Foundation. This initiative has resulted in over 100 residents seeking entry-level positions (at neighboring JFK Airport and surrounding areas) trained in retail and food services, customer service, sales and ticket agents and desk concierges.

To assist COVID displaced workers and less experienced younger job seekers, RDRC was competitively awarded a grant from the NYS Department of Labor to provide job skills training, certified customer service, certified security and surveillance and Class D driver's education/lessons to a total of 225 low-moderate income residents. To date, RDRC has trained

and over 175 persons with either OSHA, Security Guard, or drivers' education in anticipation of employment opportunities to be created by local development projects, or neighboring JFK Airport.

JFK Redevelopment Project

JFK is one of the busiest airports in the nation and is an indispensable part of global travel and the region's economy. The airport handles nearly 62 million passengers a year, supports 280,000 jobs, and generates more than \$51 billion in sales and \$17.1 billion in wages. It is an essential component of the world's air transportation system and a regional economic driver. The post-COVID-19 JFK Airport Redevelopment Plan is a \$17B modernization project that will create 20,000 jobs. The project will require 30% minority hires and 7% women hires across all construction trades with a higher 40% minority hires among Laborers; best efforts to hire from zip codes around JFK Airport followed by all of Queens. Working with Rep. Meeks and Queens Borough President Richards and building on the work of the JFK Redevelopment Community Advisory Council appointed in October 2018, the leaders helped secure the community benefits package and a commitment that the Port Authority will require the projects be subject to Project Labor Agreements. RDRC currently serves as a member of the JFK Redevelopment Advisory Board and Co-Chair of the JFK Workforce and Career Development Committee.



Construction Training and Placement

RDRC and Urban Upbound have been selected by The Community Builders and Phipps Houses developers to serve as workforce community partners providing recruitment, jobs skills training, OSHA training, site placement services for the DFR Redevelopment Project. Thus far, a total of 75 residents have been trained and certified with OSHA 30, OSHA Flagger and OSHA Site Safety Training (SST).

Since 2019, a total of 97 residents have been hired collectively on the Beach 21st Street, Rockaway Village and Arverne East development sites with a commitment to train and hire more residents as the projects progress.

In addition to the residents trained and placed at the Beach 21st Street Project, during FY2022, RDRC trained over 40 residents with OSHA 30, Site Safety Training in collaboration with the Arverne East Development Partners to be placed on an ongoing basis as those projects ramp up over the next several months.

KEY INVESTMENTS

Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project - \$288M

The Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project was a community-driven project that included community-based organizations, civic groups, faith-based organizations, and elected officials at all levels that demanded the City conduct a massive re-zoning and master plan after 40 years of neglect of the Rockaways most important commercial corridor, Far Rockaway. Collectively, we created the Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action in 2016, which spurred a rezoning that prioritized affordable housing and support for area businesses. The initial City investment in the Project was \$91M and soon after increased to \$288M in public financing and investments.

Highlight: Far Rockaway Village – \$1B - Phipps Houses

Rockaway Village is a key component of the 2017 Downtown Far Rockaway rezoning, which brought \$288 million of capital investments to the neighborhood. The project is currently in Phase IV of the project.



Figure 3: Far Rockaway Village

Located on the old Far Rockaway Shopping Site that symbolized the decay of Downtown Far Rockaway, the anchor mixed-used development project of the overall Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project is Far Rockaway Village. The project includes 5 phases that will include 8 buildings with 1700 affordable housing units and over 110,000 square of commercial and community facility space, and 590 parking spaces restore and create a new connection between the A train station on Mott Avenue and the LIRR station on Nameoke Avenue.

Downtown Far Rockaway Streetscapes Improvement Project - \$139M

Launched in 2018, Streets in the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project is now complete. Downtown Far Rockaway has been overhauled with new pedestrian space, landscaping and green infrastructure, and improvements to stormwater drainage to alleviate chronic flooding. The project also included critical street safety improvements, including the

addition of more sidewalks, new landscaping, and green infrastructure. It also includes upgrades to 25 blocks of stormwater draining to help reduce the flooding risk from heavy rain.



Figure 4: Downtown Far Rockaway Streetscape Improvement along Beach 20th Street

In total, the Downtown Far Rockaway Streetscape Improvement Project included:

- More than two miles of new storm sewers and 88 new catch basins to alleviate flooding
- More than two miles of new curbs
- 101,000 square feet of new sidewalks
- 10,000 feet of existing sanitary sewers replaced with new pipes
- 10,000 feet of aging water mains replaced with new pipes
- A net gain of 71 new trees for the neighborhood
- A new, 15,000-foot pedestrian plaza will offer community space for events, seating greenery, bike racks, and a public restroom

Beach 21st Street Project - \$120M – The Community Builders

The Beach 21st Project transformed vacant city-owned parking lot into a new, 100-percent affordable, mixed-use development project with 224 affordable homes near the Far Rockaway-Mott Avenue subway station. Supporting access to vital transit, daycare, and jobs, the building offers apartments affordable to New Yorkers earning between 40 and 80 percent of area median income, with 23 homes with on-site services reserved for New Yorkers who formerly experienced homelessness.



Figure 5 Beach 21st Street Project

The building includes on-site laundry, a fitness room, and a rooftop terrace with a walking track, as well as approximately 28,000 square feet of retail and community space, including a day care center.

Queens Public Library Far Rockaway Branch - \$33 Million

Scheduled for completion in Winter 2022, the new Far Rockaway Library will replace the existing library building, while also doubling the area of library space from 9,000 to 18,000 square feet. It is located at the intersection of Mott and Central Avenues in Far Rockaway, among the more dynamic, ethnically diverse communities in the borough of Queens. This new building seeks to increase the services needed by the neighborhood, and it is hoped that along with other revitalization efforts, it will serve as a catalyst for community transformation. The project, currently under construction in New York City, has received the Public Design Commission of the City of New York's recognition for outstanding public projects, the Annual Award for Excellence in Design.



Figure 6: Rendering of New Queens Public Library Far Rockaway Branch

The new building will be twice the size of the original at 18,000-square-feet, the structure will feature a glass curtain wall, a pyramidal entrance, a central atrium, and a blue roof designed to detain water. Once completed, the LEED-certified building will be two stories, have an ADA-compliant entrance and restrooms, a meeting room, and a quiet room. The facility will also feature self-check-in/out equipment, an elevator, additional computer stations for children, and teen and adult spaces.

DESTINATION FAR ROCKAWAY! PROJECT ELEMENTS

Project Component 1 – Transform the O’Kane Building into the Rockaway Music Art & Culture Center - \$1.5M

The ***O’Kane Building*** capital construction project involves the renovation of a five story, 9,000 square foot masonry structure. The Renaissance Center is in the heart of Downtown Far Rockaway adjacent to the Mott Avenue Train Station. RDRC as the project sponsor has already begun renovations to the building and secured over \$1.25M in investments for the completed renovations. RDRC utilize a portion of the NY Forward funds to complete the building renovations.



21-17 Mott Avenue, 1940's.



21-17 Mott Avenue today



ACB Architects, PLLC rendering

Project Renovation Description

The Project will require a complete gut renovation to include the following core and shell building elements and interior construction:

- Construction of new elevator shaft and installation of new multipurpose passenger/freight elevator
- Upgrade/modification/creation of exit stairs and exit shaft core walls
- Creation of new main floor lobby and elevator lobbies
- Installation of HVAC, fire protection, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems
- Complete rebuilding of any damaged floors
- New floors throughout with some moderate joist replacement anticipated
- Reconstruction of existing roof structure as required and application of new roofing
- Reconstruction of interior perimeter walls
- Interior construction and finishes
- General interior and exterior lighting
- Upgrade of existing house sewer connection
- Installation of building communications systems

O’Kane Building/Rockaways Music, Arts & Cultural Center

Currently, Downtown Far Rockaway can only offer limited seasonal outdoor music, arts and cultural events and activities because it lacks a facility to host events year-round. While the DFR Streetscapes Redesign Project does create additional outdoor space, the DFR does include indoor community facility space, there are no provisions for the inclusion of music, arts, and culture.

RDRC is proposing to transform the O’Kane Building into the hub coordinate concerts and entertainment events such as the Annual Queens Caribbean Carnival, host arts exhibits and cultural programs in its indoor Amphitheater, as well as ongoing youth and adult programs focused on careers in communications, media, and technology-based industries.

RDRC has examined several publications and impact studies focused on the impact of arts & cultural in urban renewal and has determined that it is one of the most critical elements missing in the DFR Redevelopment Project. According to the Americans for Arts Organization publication entitled, “Cultural District: The Arts As Strategy for Revitalizing Our Cities,” “A cultural district is a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction. Cultural districts can be found in communities as small as Riverhead, New York, (population 8,814) to New York City (7.3 million). Cultural districts boost urban revitalization in many ways: beautify and animate cities, provide employment, attract residents and tourists to the city, complement adjacent businesses, enhance property values, expand the tax base, attract well-educated employees, and contribute to creative, innovative environment The impact of cultural districts is measurable. The arts attract residents and tourists who also support adjacent businesses such as restaurants, lodging, retail, and parking. The presence of the arts enhances property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region. The arts attract a well-educated work force - a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. Finally, the arts contribute to the creativity and innovation of a community. “

Project 2: Downtown Far Rockaway Wi-Fi Network - \$200,000

The Downtown Far Rockaway Public Wi-Fi Project launched in 2016 in response to the devastating impact of Superstorm Sandy on the Rockaways inability to communicate with concerned family members, emergency services and disaster relief organizations. In the most critical period immediately after Superstorm Sandy, the Rockaways was isolated from the rest of New York City with no way of communication – Internet, cell phone or landline. The Public Wi-Fi Project will enable anyone entering the District with an Internet-capable cell phone or tablet free access to the Internet without the use of satellites or cell towers by installing a series of wireless routers and rooftop antennas at local businesses and organizations. The Project also successfully trained seven community residents to build, install and maintain the Wi-Fi network. Unfortunately, with the increased zoning that has allowed for the development of taller buildings, the Downtown Wireless Mesh system that relied to 1-2 story buildings with clear sight lines to communicate is inoperable.

The New Downtown Wi-Fi Project would enable anyone entering the District with an Internet-capable cell phone or tablet free access to the Internet without the use of satellites or cell towers by installing a series of wireless routers and rooftop antennas on the highest buildings in Downtown Far Rockaway: St. John’s Episcopal Hospital; Beach 21st Street; Rockaway Village and Church of the Nazarene Senior Housing Building located on Central and Nameoke Avenues.

Benefits of the Wi-Fi Project include keeping people informed of news, travel, and weather; upcoming events and activities; merchant sales and restaurant specials; local training and job opportunities; and points of interest. Second, with more people entering the district and staying longer to enjoy our public plazas and spaces, we want to keep them connected and informed with employers, friends, families, etc.

The project timeline is less than one year. We are partnering with Community Tech NY, a not-for-profit technology firm to develop a cost estimate that will include antennas, wiring, routers, and installation.

Project 3: Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program - \$500,000

Launched in 2016, The Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program was an initiative of the New York City Business Assistance Corporation (NYBAC) and the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) with the support of the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Administered by RDRC, the grant provided a 75% match of funds (up to \$10,000 per storefront) to help local business and property owners complete storefront renovation projects. The goal of the program was to enhance commercial corridors through targeted improvements to small businesses in Downtown Far Rockaway. The program resulted in 18 businesses receiving matching grants with one property owner, Kaufman Organization investing over \$300,000 in building renovation match funds to improve nine (9) storefronts.

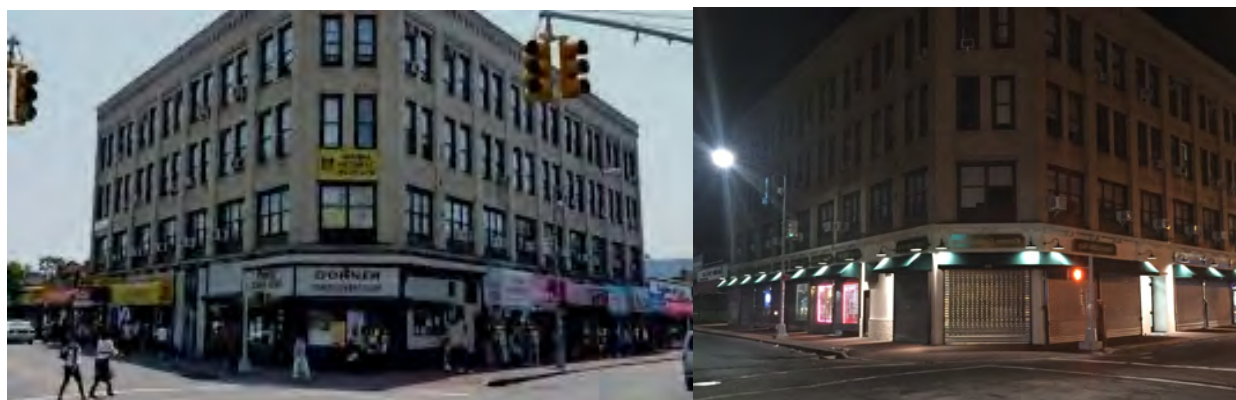


Figure 7: 1931 Mott Avenue Before and After improvements

RDRC is seeking to use NY Forward funds to implement a Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program Round II. The goals of the program are to:

- Revitalize building façades using best practices in storefront design
- Improve commercial corridors and promote the character and stability of Downtown Far Rockaway
- Allow longstanding businesses to stay competitive and keep pace with neighborhood change
- Create a stronger, safer neighborhood that attracts residents and shoppers

The DFR Storefront Improvement Program will assist 50 local businesses with grants of up to \$10,000 for ground level storefronts. Eligible uses will include:

- New signage and awning
- Masonry work and brick pointing
- Cornice repair
- Installation of open-grill security gates
- Storefront framing and glass repair/replacement
- Exterior lighting installation
- Exterior painting
- Door repair/replacement
- Improvements to increase accessibility and compliance with building codes

The project timeline is one (1) year. The projected budget is \$550,000 and calculated as follows: \$500,000 for storefront renovations (\$10,000 x 50) + \$40,000 for architect fees + \$10,000 for permitting and filing fees.

Project Component 4: Purchase of Customer Containers for Micro-Business Development - \$200,000

RDRC is seeing a growing trend of long-time business tenants being priced out of their leased space by owners seeking to attract new tenants at higher lease rates. Prior to the pandemic, Downtown Far Rockaway ground level vacancy rate was approximately 8%. As of June 2022, it is at 18% and rising, due to several factors, including escalating rents and month-to-month leases. While downsizing and relocating into a smaller space may not be feasible for many businesses, our proposed custom designed storage containers may be an option to remain in the district. The benefits are:

- Cost savings - rents for a pop-up can be as low as 20 per cent of normal rates
- Less risk - short-term leases make pop-ups more affordable and less risky
- A chance to test the market for your product; see how well products sell and seek feedback from real customers
- Test the location - see how well your products sell in different locations
- Brand awareness - a chance to raise awareness of your product and build brand loyalty
- Creating urgency - customers are often more willing to buy immediately if they feel the shop or the item will only be there for a short period

RDRC is proposing to place several containers in each of the public plazas as pop-up shops that are temporary retail spaces that can be used to promote and sell products of all types, ranging from food and drinks to clothing, gifts, or other merchandise at a fraction of the overhead compared to traditional businesses.

RDRC has secured a \$50,000 grant to engage a design consultant Combo Colab to design one custom built 20x8 storage container to be located at the Beach 20th Street Plaza. Our goal is to use the container as a seasonal pop-up business for local entrepreneurs to use as they try to develop their business that do not have the finances needed to get a great business idea off the ground is a common situation many would-be entrepreneurs find themselves in. Pop-up shops have proven to be a good way to give entrepreneurs with a business idea a try without the cost

or commitment of leasing permanent business premises. They are also a great way for online businesses to trial a bricks-and-mortar storefront.



RDRC will work with the City Councilwoman Selvena Brooks-Powers and Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Jr. to expedite the City’s approval process that will include both the NYC Department of Transportation and City Parks Department for the placement of the pop-up containers. RDRC will allocate a portion of the NY Forward (\$200,000) for the purchase/build/install of the containers. The project cost of each container is approximately \$40,000 – \$45,000.

Project Component 5: Downtown Far Rockaway Mural Arts Program

In late 2020, RDRC launched an ambitious storefront arts campaign to address the closure of downtown Far Rockaway due to the pandemic. Downtown Far Rockaway resembled a ghost town with blocks of solid rolldown gates. To lift the community’s spirits up, RDRC with the support of the NYC Department Small Business Services Neighborhood 360 grant launched the Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Mural Arts Program that included public meetings (remote), information sessions for property and business owners, and a community panel to judge artists design concepts. As a result of the project, that included social justice themed artwork, over 14 rolldown gates have been completed to date with another 30 businesses requesting that their storefronts be adorned with artwork and the developers of Far Rockaway Village are considering having similar artwork project be completed in their lobby area.



ABOUT RDRC

Established as a 501(c)(3) corporation in 1978, *Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation* (RDRC) is headquartered on the eastern section of the Rockaway peninsula known as Far Rockaway. However, many programs and services RDRC offers extend to all thirteen (13) neighborhoods that comprise the Rockaway peninsula. RDRC is committed to developing stronger, more resilient Rockaways that is rooted in our mission statement, *“to promote the revitalization of the Rockaways economic base and neighborhoods, and to secure an improved quality of life for its residents.”*

RDRC is governed by an eleven-member Board of Directors that includes community and business leaders, and residents governs RDRC. RDRC employs nineteen (19) full-time staff persons with three (3) operating divisions: *Education and Employment & Career Development Services for*

Youth; Workforce & Career Development Services for Adults and Neighborhood Preservation Services.

Commercial Revitalization & Real Estate Development Highlights

- Successfully organized a group of local merchants into the Rockaway East Merchants Association (REMA) to address many of the safety, sanitation and parking concerns that have impeded the economic growth of downtown Far Rockaway. Second, to participate in the planned commercial revitalization activities that will impact the entire downtown shopping district.
- Implemented a business attraction campaign to attract new businesses into our downtown district. RDRC has developed a business attraction tool kit that includes pertinent market retail data, attends business trade shows.
- Successfully managed The Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program Round to assist local businesses improve their storefronts as a strategy to attract more consumers into the district as well as attract new businesses into the district. The grant provided a 75% match up to \$10,000 per storefront to help local businesses and property owners complete their storefront renovation projects.
- Activated the Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza to provide the community with seasonal events and activities coordinated by RDRC – concerts, merchant fairs, food court, games, exercise, and a holiday tree lighting ceremony.
- Launched a Storefront Mural Art Project utilizing local artists to beautify solid roll-down gates with themed temporary artwork.
- Implemented a seven-day per week street cleaning program to keep sidewalks clean, empty trash baskets, replace liners and seasonal snow removal services.
- Partnered with NYS Senator James Sanders, Jr. to create the largest cultural event in the Rockaways, Queens Carnival that boasts over 10,000 attendees.

Community Collaborations, Partnerships & Affiliations

- *The Far Rockaway/Arverne Nonprofit Coalition* is comprised of 14+ nonprofits and community-based organizations committed to the development of youth in the Rockaways, particularly the Far Rockaway/Arverne neighborhoods since its formation in 2010.
- *Downtown Far Rockaway Revitalization Working Group* - to develop a set of goals and recommendations to support the revitalization of downtown Far Rockaway. Working Groups efforts translated into the basic framework for a \$91M capital investment to improve infrastructure, mixed-use housing development, transportation upgrades/redesign, new streetscapes increased access to community services.
- *Community Partners* - St. John's Episcopal Hospital; The Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center; Peninsula Preparatory Academy Charter School; Peninsula Center for Extended Care and Rehabilitation; Bishop Charles Waldo MacLean Episcopal Nursing Home; New York Career Training School; Ready Rockaway; Central Avenue Assisted Living Center; New Horizons Counseling Services; JCCRP, Dress for Success; and Visiting Nurses Services of New York City.
- *Arts & Culture Institution Partners* - Queens Council on the Arts, Black Spectrum Theatre, Rockaway Artists Alliance, Flushing Town Hall, and Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning.



Destination Far Rockaway Attachments

- 1. RDRC ANNUAL REPORT**
- 2. DFR ROCKAWAY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**
- 3. DFR STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT GUIDEBOOK**



CALENDAR YEAR

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

**1920 MOTT AVENUE
FAR ROCKAWAY, NY 11691
WWW.RDRC.ORG
718.327.5300**



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

For many 2021 was a year of uncertainty as much as the powers that be, local government, City/State Officials, CDC Health Experts attempted in giving us hope in how to combat this uninvited guest, the world was humbled by the events that were taking place and no one knew how to stop it or where to find relief. We relied on scientific data while an uncommon people labeled as “essential workers” were now our new “First Responders. Nothing was steadfast and everything was uncertain including the economic outlook for most “non-essential” businesses.

2021 represented a major challenge for many organizations that traditionally delivered services in person to providing those services remotely. As the wave of uncertainty forced all of us to re-imagine how we delivered services RDRC did the same by expanding our in-person model to include hybrid and remote to maintain our commitment to *“Promote the revitalization of the Rockaways economic base and neighborhoods, and to assist residents in securing and improved quality of life”*.

As an organization, we faced the challenge of converting to a remote schedule or to remain open to provide in person services and programs to those in need without the ability to access digital meeting/conferencing platforms due to lack of Internet service in the home, the equipment needed beyond a smartphone, or the familiarity to navigate a host of meeting/conferencing platforms. RDRC made the organizational decision to remain “open for business” by implementing strict COVID-19 protocols as a show of support for the community we serve.

We are pleased to share our 2021 highlights with you, because without your trust in us, *RDRC never would have made it without you!*

Linda Plummer

Linda Plummer
Board Chair

Kevin Alexander

Kevin W. Alexander, MPA
President & CEO



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT/EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Engaging our youth in educational, college & career activities, community service activities remain as the foundation for building community, children, and youth. Education, Employment & Career Development Services (EECDS) is RDRC's largest program area, overseeing several distinct programs that engaged over 2,000 in 2021. With funding provided by the NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, RDRC was able to successfully create partnerships with our local high schools, 300+ local businesses, community organizations, elected officials, and public agencies by providing worksite and internship opportunities for the following programs:

- Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) that provided job skills training, financial literacy, paid jobs and project-based learning opportunities and traditional employment placement in high valued employment sectors to 1,600+ youth aged 14-21. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, RDRC adapted its traditional model of placing youth into worksites to also include remote worksite assignments, customized on-line training projects.



- Work, Learn & Grow Afterschool Employment Program (WLEG) that provided paid employment and internships to 200 Rockaway's high school juniors and seniors that included in-person, remote and hybrid learning opportunities with local businesses, community organizations and elected officials. Several of our afterschool worksite partners included Walgreens, NYC Police Department, NYC Parks & Recreation, Warren Levi Martial Arts Corporation, St. John's Episcopal Hospital, Queens Hospital, NYC Councilwoman Selvena Brooks-Powers, Blanche Head Start, ASA College, Bolt Architecture just to name a few.





- *In-School Youth/College & Beyond Program* to support to 66 high school juniors and senior's goals to attend college or begin a career. We provide college workshops, guest speakers that included college counselors/advisors/recruiters providing guidance on how to successfully navigate the college selection process. In the Fall of 2021, our Program assisted 39 of 66 successfully begin their college journey, many who represent first-in-family to attend.

ADULT LEARNING/WORKFORCE & CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

At the core of our workforce development program is the Job Readiness Skills Training Course that provides perspective job seekers with up to 35 hours per session that includes workplace norms, communications, interviewing techniques, financial literacy, how to research perspective employers, how to complete on-line job applications, cover letter and resume writing. In FY 2021, WCDS trained 88+ persons that were also assisted with additional one-on-one coaching and job placement assistance. Once student-participants completed the job readiness course, they could elect to enroll in one of the following vocational skills training courses:

- OSHA - To assist our adult learners and job seekers interested in a career in construction, launched several initiatives focused on providing community residents with 40 hours of OSHA training that included Site Safety Training and Flagger.
- Customer Service –for persons interested in jobs and careers requiring customer service skills, RDRC launched a certified customer service training and certification to students-participants with our partner, the National Retail Federation/Foundation.



- Ground Transportation - persons interested in acquiring a NYS Class D Driver's License to find employment in the transportation field, or to meet job requirements, in late 2021 we launched a Driver's Education program for residents that will result in student-participants earning a Class D License.



- Unarmed Security - persons interested in acquiring a NYS Unarmed Security Guard License, we launched a Security Guard training program with a locally owned business, Supreme Academy.

NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION SERVICES/HOMEBUYER, FORECLOSURE & CREDIT COUNSELING SERVICES

Neighborhood Preservation Services continues to adapt its programs and services to meet the needs of those interested in owning a home through our HUD certified housing counseling services, to assist those that own a home and are faced with the challenge of maintaining their home due to loss of income, jobs or other circumstances through our foreclosure counseling services. Collectively, in 2021 we assisted 45 potential and current homeowners with workshops and counseling services.

In 2021, with several City-funded affordable housing developments under construction in downtown Far Rockaway, we expanded our services to assist residents register and apply as a HPD Housing Ambassador. Our services included assisting persons with creating email accounts, navigating the on-line registration process, and assisting in gathering the supporting documents necessary to complete the application process to ensure that residents had the opportunity to improve their housing situations and remain in the community.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges we undertook in 2021, was to address the lack of financial education being taught to our youth, adults, homebuyers, homeowners, entrepreneurs, and business owners by incorporating a rigorous financial literacy workshop as a core requirement for all. Our financial literacy workshop provides information on budgeting, credit, understanding the difference (and associated costs) between financial institutions (banks, credit unions) versus non-financial institutions (check cashing, payday lenders), and loan products. Collectively, we provided a minimum of 12 hours of learning to over 45 in participants.





NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION SERVICES – SMALL BUSINESS AND MWBE SERVICES

To assist businesses at-risk of closing due to the pandemic, RDRC increased its business support by providing workshops, one-on-one counseling, and in-person/on-location to learn more about the challenges they faced without having to close their businesses. As result, we were able to:

- Deliver over 10,000 units PPE supplies (face masks, wipes, and hand sanitizer) through our partnerships the NYC Small Business Services, Queens Chamber of Commerce and National Grid.
- Provide over \$100,000 in grant support to local businesses through our partnerships with the Local Initiative Support Corporation, Verizon, and Queens Borough President Donovan Richards.
- Provide technical assistance through our Rockaways Business Resource Center to provide information on resources available for local businesses and promote local businesses through our Rockaways Business Directory and Restaurant Guides.
- Graduate 13 minority and women-owned businesses with a comprehensive business management course through a partnership with a national partner, Interise. The Amplify Queens Now Street Wise MBA Program is a 13-session course covering all aspects of business ownership – accounting, finance, marketing, digital marketing, supplier chain development, inventory management, human resources, professional networking, and development of a business plan.

One of the major obstacles we faced in our community engagement activities was the need to balance our outdoor gathering events with the need to safely distance while having fun. RDRC was diligent in ensuring that all attendees received PPE upon entry, conducted temperature checks and assisted everyone in maintaining social distancing regulations as much as was possible. In so doing we were able to host the following events.

- Summertime @ The Plaza Concert & Event Series – through our partnerships with the NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Small Business Services, Make Music New York, and National Grid we hosted three live concerts, community service events, and a spectacular Halloween Event followed by our Annual Lights of Hope Tree Lighting Event that collectively attracted over 2,000 persons into the Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza.
- Keeping Our Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial Corridor Clean Campaign in collaboration with NYC Department Small Business Services, NYC Department of Sanitation, NYC



Councilwoman Selvena Brooks-Powers and the Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless provided seven days of sidewalk cleaning, trash removal and snow removal services.

- Beautifying Our Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial Corridor through the installation of temporary artwork on solid rolldown gates created by local artists to brighten our downtown and lay the foundation for an Artists Row.

Community Engagement

Rockaways Task Force for Racial Inclusion & Equity Coalition

In response to the severe impact COVID-19 was having in Far Rockaway/Rockaways, RDRC in partnership with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission initiated a coalition to provide information and resource about COVID-19 restrictions, testing and vaccination locations, events, and activities. The Rockaways Racial, Inclusion and Equity Coalition includes local stakeholders such as Queens Defenders, Queens Public Library, Far Rockaway Greek Council, NYC Public Library, St. John's Episcopal Hospital-Mental Health Clinic, & Seagirt Adult Day Care Center. One of the major accomplishments of TRIE was to launch a successful campaign, "How To Spend \$40,000 in Community" that resulted in 750+ survey responses that will result in a program to train seniors on how to safely use technology and mental health/wellness services for youth.

Queens Museum, Year of Uncertainty Project

The collaboration with RDRC and the Queens Museum provided a year-long exploratory exhibit to program participants. They had opportunities to engage with the Queens Museum's Artists-In-Residence in media and communications experts to explore the varied feelings they were experiencing because of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Amid the protests, civil unrest, police brutality, participants were able to use the following themes to express their uncertainties of the events that were beginning to shape their new normal:

- Civil Unrest
- Economic Disparity
- Distance Learning
- Mental Health
- Social Climate Changes and what was coming next.

From the lens of these participants RDRC youth developed a series of "Year of Uncertainty" Documentaries that were an integral component of the Queens Museum which was displayed in multiple locations within the museum which fostered a continued partnership for participants to explore Arts and Culture.



FY 2021 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

(July 1, 2020 -June 30, 2021)

Revenues, Gains and Other Support

Government Grants & Reimbursable Sponsored Projects	\$1,378,481
Government Grants – Other Sponsored Projects	157,556
Grants – Foundation & Corporate	189,500
Contributions	300
Service Fees	1,080
Interest Income	<u>10</u>
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	1,726,927

Functional Expenses

Program Services:

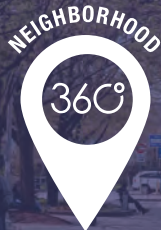
Job Readiness, Workforce and Economic Development	847,849
School-Based Programs	<u>541,559</u>
Total Program Services	1,389,408

Supporting Services

Administrative Costs	215,762
Fundraising Costs	<u>62,538</u>
Total Supporting Costs	278,300

Total Functional Costs	1,667,708
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Increase in Net Assets	59,219
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	301,155
Net Assets at End of Year	\$360,374



DOWNTOWN FAR ROCKAWAY QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



NYC
Small Business
Services

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
Gregg Bishop
Commissioner

in
partnership
with

Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center
Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation
Rockaway East Merchants Association
Rockaway Youth Task Force



ABOUT DOWNTOWN FAR ROCKAWAY



The Neighborhood 360° program was created by the **NYC Department of Small Business Services** to identify, develop and launch commercial revitalization projects in partnership with local stakeholders. Through proactive planning and targeted investments, Neighborhood 360° supports projects that strengthen and revitalize the streets, small businesses, and community-based organizations that anchor New York City neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood 360° **Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)** highlights a neighborhood's existing business landscape and consumer characteristics.

This CDNA features Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Cornaga Avenue, and Beach 20th Street commercial corridors in **Downtown Far Rockaway** which was conducted in partnership with the **Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center, Rockaway East Merchants Association, Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation, and Rockaway Youth Task Force** between November 2018 and April 2019.

Key issues and opportunities identified through this assessment will help prioritize SBS-supported local investments, and serve as an informational and marketing resource for the neighborhood.

In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **622 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

Jump to...

Key Findings	4-5
Business Inventory	6
What Merchants Say	7-10
Business Outlook & Trends	11-12
What Shoppers Say	8, 12
Physical Environment	13-15
Data Appendix	16-18

Background

Far Rockaway is a diverse community that extends midway between Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, sitting at the southernmost portion of Queens and the easternmost end of the Rockaway Peninsula. Far Rockaway is a multi-modal transportation hub with the Mott Avenue A subway station, the Far Rockaway Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) station, the QM17 Express bus to Midtown Manhattan, bus services to Queens and Nassau counties, informal care shares, dockless bike shares, and a 20-minute drive to John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport. Furthermore, it encompasses cross-peninsular roads with connections to multiple regional expressways to Manhattan.

In the last decades, Far Rockaway has suffered from disinvestment and decline. At its prime in the late 19th and early 20th century, Far Rockaway was known as “The Village,” serving as the commercial and entertainment core for the entire peninsula. It was packed with shops, movie houses, as well as civic and religious organizations. Following World War II, the community faced a severe economic decline, and middle-class residents migrated to other parts of New York City. In 1950, a fire destroyed train service to and from the peninsula, leaving the area inaccessible to those without cars and further isolating residents with limited incomes who had rely on public transportation. Although rail access was eventually restored and re-integrated into the city subway system, car ownership began to increase, resulting in a rise in highway use — by Far Rockaway residents — to reach alternative commercial destinations. In 2012, the Rockaways encountered another challenge: climate change. Hurricane Sandy battered the peninsula with 30-foot offshore waves and flood levels of more than six feet inland. Although Far Rockaway was physically less devastated compared to the rest of the peninsula due to its higher elevation, the local economy took a substantial hit. The community suffered blackouts, reduction in employment opportunities, and lack of access to needed resources, making it impossible for local businesses to reopen for an extensive period.

Today, the resiliency of the Far Rockaway community is evident. Many small businesses once again operate along Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Cornaga Avenue, and Beach 20th Street; these include, professional services, a wide variety of ethnic and fast food restaurants, and small-scale retail stores. Beach 20th Street from Brookhaven Avenue to Seagirt Boulevard has a high concentration of medical offices and healthcare services — serving as a satellite to the peninsula's only remaining full-service emergency room and hospital, St. John's Episcopal Hospital, the largest employer in the community.

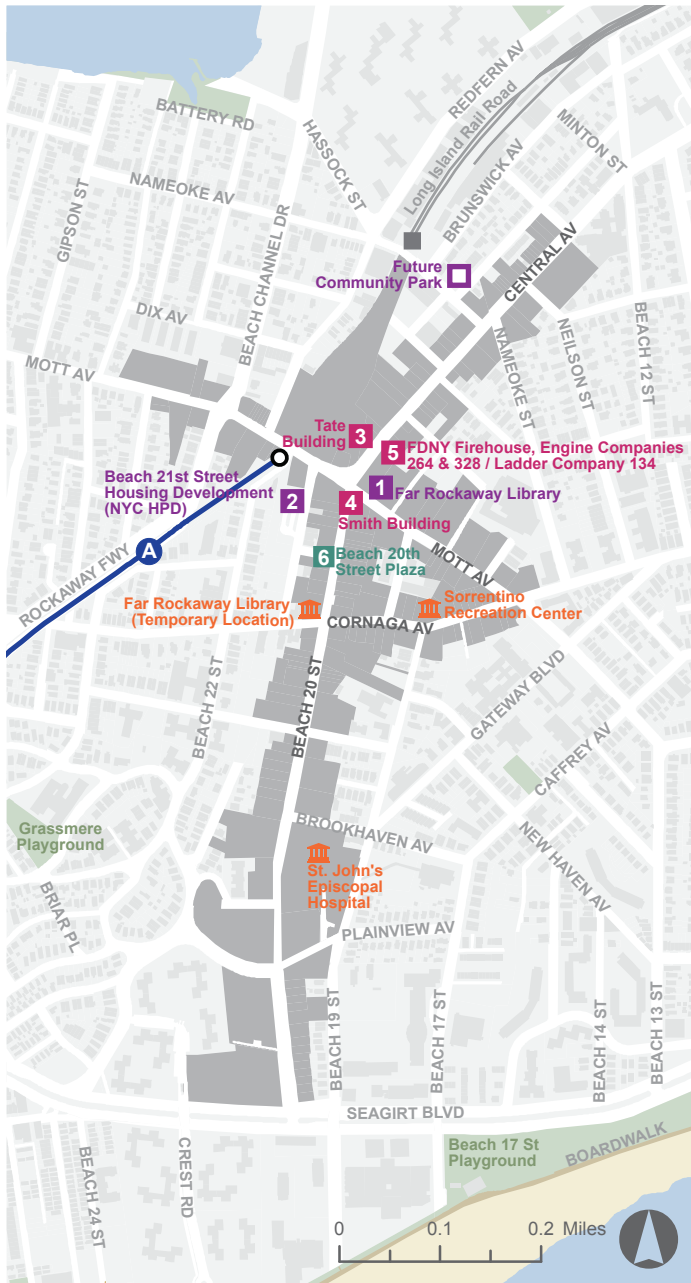
Neighborhood Demographics

A majority of Far Rockaway's nearly 54,000 residents identify as African American (41%), while slightly more than a quarter are Hispanic or Latino (31%). Far Rockaway is home to a diverse community of residents with more than 32% of its residents foreign-born. Currently, the median household income of Far Rockaway stands at \$46,230 — 20 percent lower than New York City's (\$55,191), an estimated 20 percent of residents living below the poverty line.

Future Opportunities

In late 2017, Far Rockaway was rezoned to allow for new commercial space, community facility space, and residential development. It is slated to bring thousands of units of affordable housing, as well as new retail and open space. Investments as part of the Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action will bring an estimate of \$288 million in capital investments, allowing for major infrastructure upgrades, such as new sewers, roadbeds, and sidewalks; the redevelopment of the Far Rockaway branch of the Queens Library; and service improvements to LIRR and MTA train services. The time is ripe for new and creative businesses and cultural venues to take root in the area and reposition Far Rockaway as a prime commercial destination for the region.

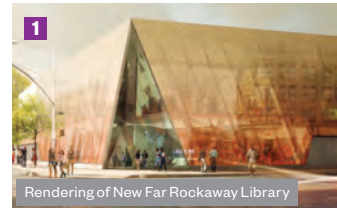
Downtown Far Rockaway



Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Public Facilities
- Current & Planned Developments
- Historic Sites & Landmarks
- Open Spaces

Notable Places



Merchant Groups, Cultural, and Nonprofit Organizations

- Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula (JCCRP)
- Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center
- Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (RDRC)
- Rockaway East Merchants Association (REMA4US)
- Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity (RISE)
- Rockaway Youth Task Force (RYTF)
- Urban Upbound

Neighborhood Events

- Annual Caribbean Carnival in the Rockaways
- Annual Feast of St. John the Baptist
- Annual Summer Merchant Fair and Fashion Show
- Downtown Far Rockaway Annual Lights of Hope Tree Lighting Ceremony
- Summertime at The Plaza Concert and Event Series

KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Transportation hub that includes the Mott Avenue A train; Long Island Railroad - Far Rockaway Branch; 7 bus lines, informal car shares, access to dockless bike shares connecting Downtown Far Rockaway to Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau County.
- ▶ Home to a large long-standing business community, with 42% of businesses surveyed reporting to have been in the community for 11 years or more.
- ▶ Diverse merchant community serving as an entry point for immigrant entrepreneurs — business owners reflect Vietnamese, Korean, Central and South American, Dominican, Chinese, Russian, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and Jewish heritages, among others.
- ▶ Deep sense of solidarity, trust, and mutual support among long-standing business owners and customers.
- ▶ Rich in well-preserved architectural façades that include churches, office buildings and palatial spaces which were once popular movie theaters.
- ▶ Employment hub that is home to more than 1,000 direct jobs via St. John's Episcopal Hospital, which is also the heart of a concentration of small businesses in the healthcare industry.
- ▶ Civic center which fosters local engagement via the Queens Public Library, NYC Fire and Police Departments, United States Post Office, Community Board 14, and offices of local and state elected officials and many other active community organizations and institutions.

Challenges

- ▶ Lack of active and inviting public open spaces in the downtown core.
- ▶ Many merchants are on month-to-month leases, with 44% of those surveyed reporting to have two years or less remaining on their commercial leases.
- ▶ Perceived low quality of goods and services, lack of retail diversity, sit-down restaurants, and family entertainment, leading consumers to shop at malls in Nassau County and other parts of Queens and Brooklyn.
- ▶ Petty theft and perception of safety issues cost businesses thousands of dollars each year — some merchants have responded by changing hours of operation, raising prices to cover losses, or relocating outside the community.
- ▶ Absence of shopping options for healthy food, fresh produce, farmers markets, and groceries—the only farmers market on the peninsula is held on Saturdays during the growing season and is located mid-peninsula.
- ▶ Insufficient awareness among small businesses on how to navigate government regulations on tickets, fines and violations directly related to their business operations.
- ▶ Informal car shares park illegally on Mott Avenue blocking stores and disrupting the pedestrian experience.
- ▶ Planned infrastructure improvements over next five years — including sewer replacement, street flood mitigation, street bed repair, and paving — will create considerable challenges for storefront businesses that are struggling to remain open.





Downtown Far Rockaway Lights of Hope Tree Lighting Ceremony



Golden Krust Downtown Far Rockaway



Downtown Far Rockaway Community Engagement Meeting



Annual REMA4US Merchant Fair & Fashion Show - MRM Jazz Trio

Opportunities

- ▶ Preserve and enhance the neighborhood's outstanding architecture and character.
- ▶ Improve pedestrian and visitor wayfinding, bicycle infrastructure, and streetscape amenities to emphasize proximity of Rockaways' beaches to the downtown commercial core, promoting the area as a destination for after-beach shopping and entertainment.
- ▶ Support the continued development and capacity building of local merchant associations and place management organizations, to help strengthen connections between City agencies, businesses, and local nonprofits.
- ▶ Create programs to engage local youth to learn entrepreneurship skills and become proactive stewards of the neighborhood.
- ▶ Work with city agencies, elected officials and key stakeholders to rationalize curbside use for commercial loading zones in the downtown commercial core.
- ▶ Foster an improved connection between local residents and the Rockaway Workforce Career Center to provide jobseekers with easy access to free services and training opportunities.
- ▶ Explore the formation of a Business Improvement District in order to provide sustained resources and capacity to maintain and program public space within the downtown commercial core.
- ▶ Designate a primary point of contact to provide access to information, support, and resources to guide residents and business owners during periods of extensive construction and infrastructure improvements.
- ▶ Partner with the MTA to promote Downtown Far Rockaway as a destination — connecting visitors from the Long Island Railroad via improved bus or shuttle access to local beaches.
- ▶ Create seasonal, annual, and periodic events to attract families to shop and enjoy the area, such as farmers markets, youth sports and activities, and music and arts festivals.
- ▶ Leverage existing and future public spaces to host community events and other activities in partnership with local businesses and community-based organizations.

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, a Neighborhood 360° Grant will be made available by SBS to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/neighborhood360

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Business Inventory

342

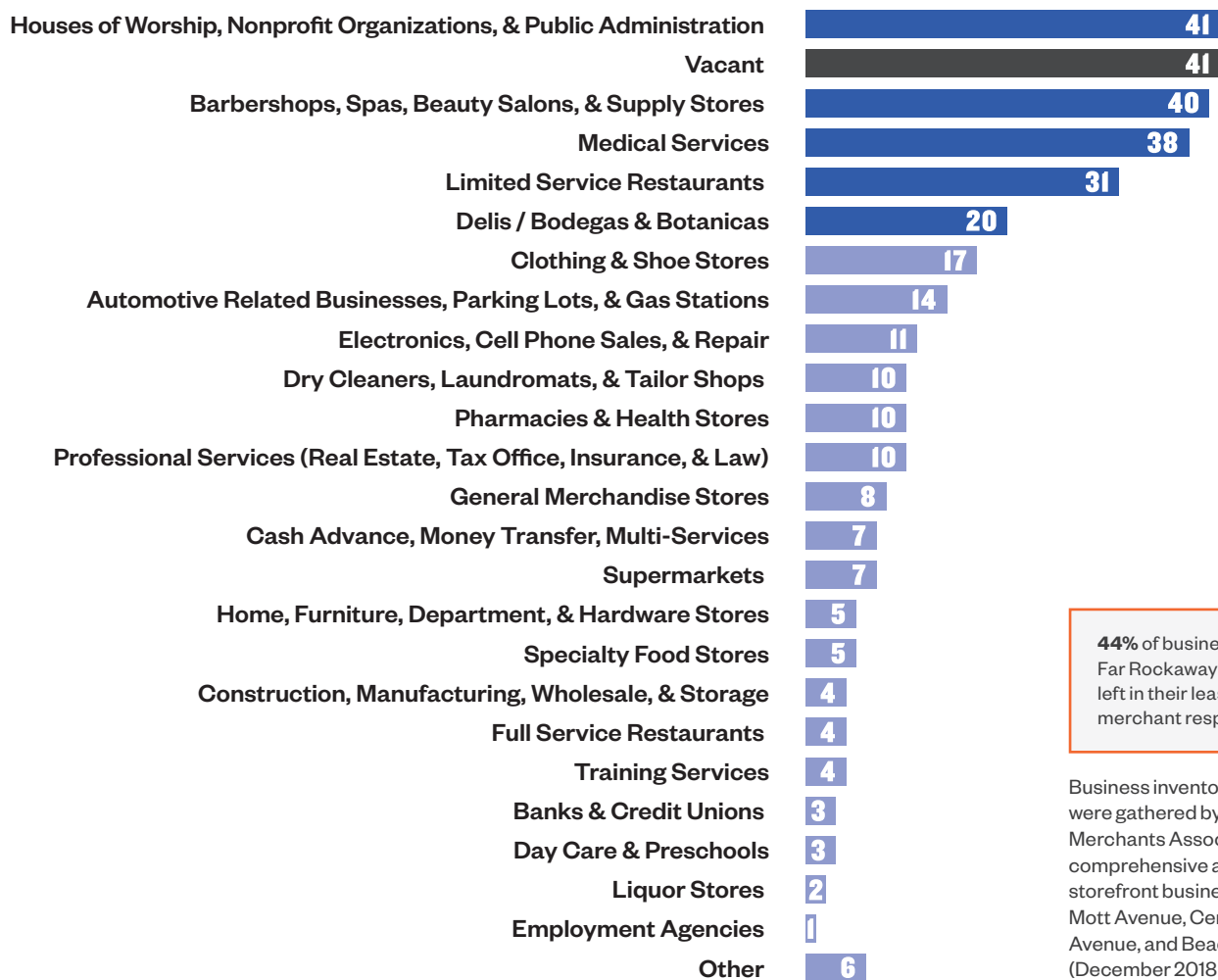
Total Number of Storefronts

12%

Storefront Vacancy*

*Note: In 2018, New York City's 75 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 8.9% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 7.3% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, 2018)

Storefront & Retail Mix



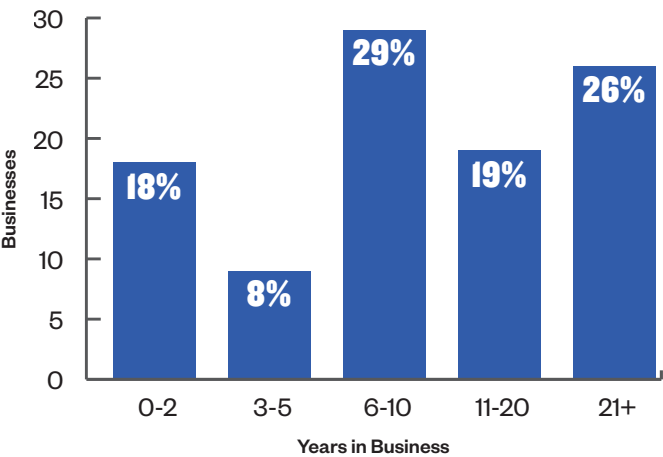
44% of businesses in Downtown Far Rockaway only have 2 years left in their lease – based on 41 merchant responses.

Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Rockaway East Merchants Association through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Cornaga Avenue, and Beach 20th Street. (December 2018 to January 2019).



What We've Heard from Downtown Far Rockaway Merchants

How many years have you been in business here?

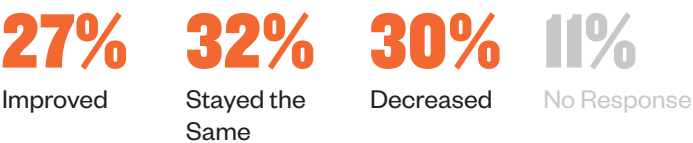


*Note: The mean is the average of all responses, the median is the middle number when all responses are arranged in ascending order, and the mode is the most common response.

Do you own or rent your property?



Over the past year, has your business improved, stayed the same, or decreased?



How many employees do you have?



What are the three biggest challenges for your business?

- ▶ Lack of parking / transit
- ▶ Crime / safety
- ▶ Commercial rent / lease

What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

	% Merchant Responses
▶ Marketing support	19%
▶ Access to financing	17%
▶ Space improvements	11%
▶ Lease support	10%
▶ New equipment	10%
▶ Legal support	9%
▶ No response	8%
▶ Other	7%
▶ Regulatory compliance assistance	5%
▶ Training for staff	4%

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard From Downtown Far Rockaway Merchants and Shoppers

How is this commercial district different from others?

"This district provides a variety of people of different backgrounds and cultures to learn & understand one another."

"The people in this area are like my family."

"Customers and business owners are nice. Most of us have been here a long time, so we understand each other."

"Good transportation — subway, bus, and the LIRR."

What changes would you like to see to improve the commercial activity in the area?

"More activities, nightlife, and more storefronts on the beachside."

"Activities to keep the youth occupied."

"With all the revitalization happening downtown, we need to ensure the business corridor looks the same (better!) throughout the community."

"A safer place would attract more people/customers."

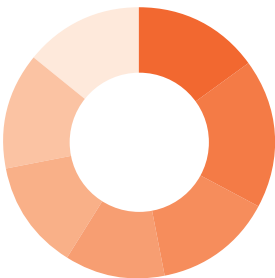
"We need holiday decorations!"

What changes need to occur in Downtown Far Rockaway to attract more visitors / shoppers?

% Merchant Response



% Consumer Response

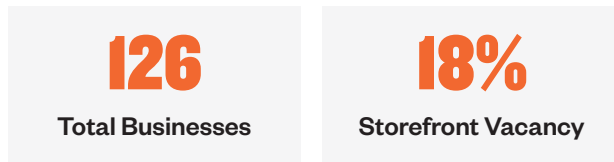


	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
Safety	18%	15%
Parking	17%	18%
Landscaping / Beautification	14%	14%
Sanitation	12%	12%
Storefront Improvements	11%	13%
Community Events	10%	14%
Merchant Collaboration	9%	NA
Street Lighting	9%	14%

Source: Based on 146 merchant surveys conducted by REMA4US and 436 consumer surveys conducted by the Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center. Winter 2018.

What We've Heard from Mott Avenue Merchants

Business Inventory



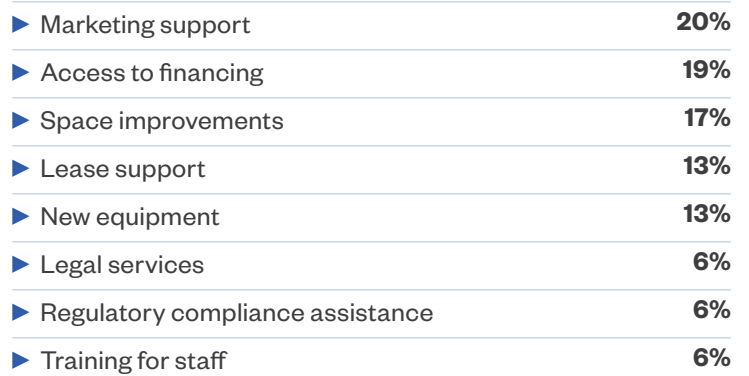
Do you own or rent your property?



Most Common Businesses

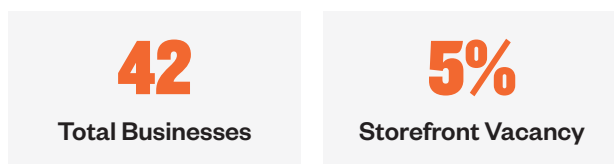


What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

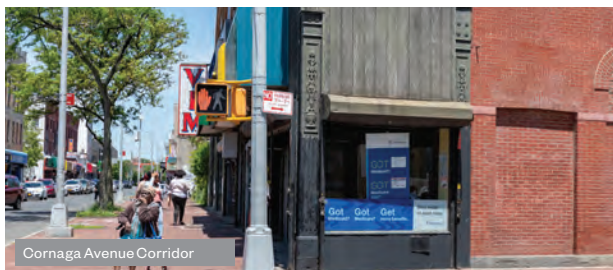


What We've Heard from Cornaga Avenue Merchants

Business Inventory



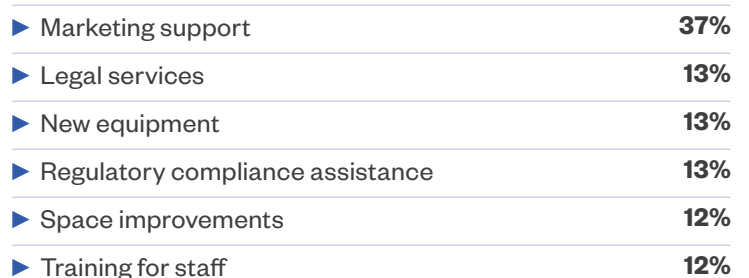
Do you own or rent your property?



Most Common Businesses



What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

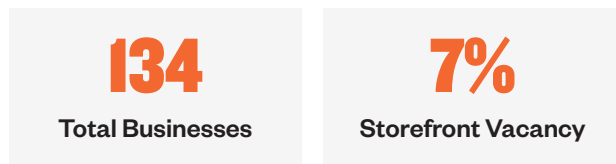


Mott Avenue renter versus owner data is based on responses from 66 merchants; Cornaga Avenue data is based on four merchant responses.

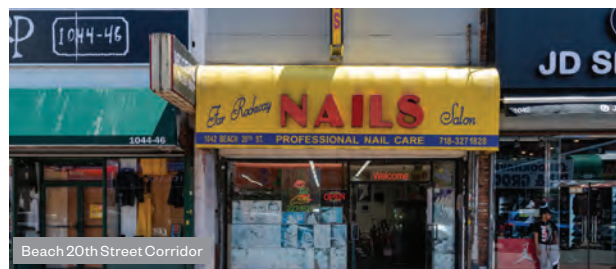
BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Beach 20th Street Merchants

Business Inventory



Do you own or rent your property?



Most Common Businesses

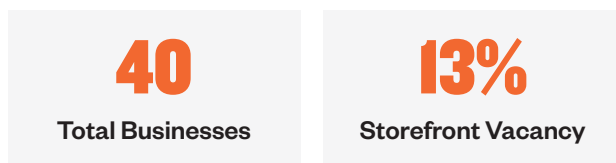


What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

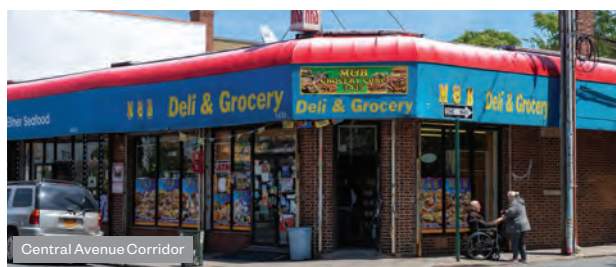


What We've Heard from Central Avenue Merchants

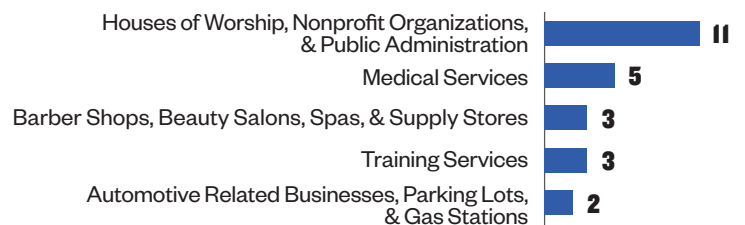
Business Inventory



Do you own or rent your property?



Most Common Businesses



What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?



Beach 20th Street renter versus owner data is based on responses from 56 merchant; Central Avenue data is based on eight merchant responses.

Downtown Far Rockaway Retail Opportunity

Residents spend

\$636M

each year in goods and services

Local businesses make

\$247M

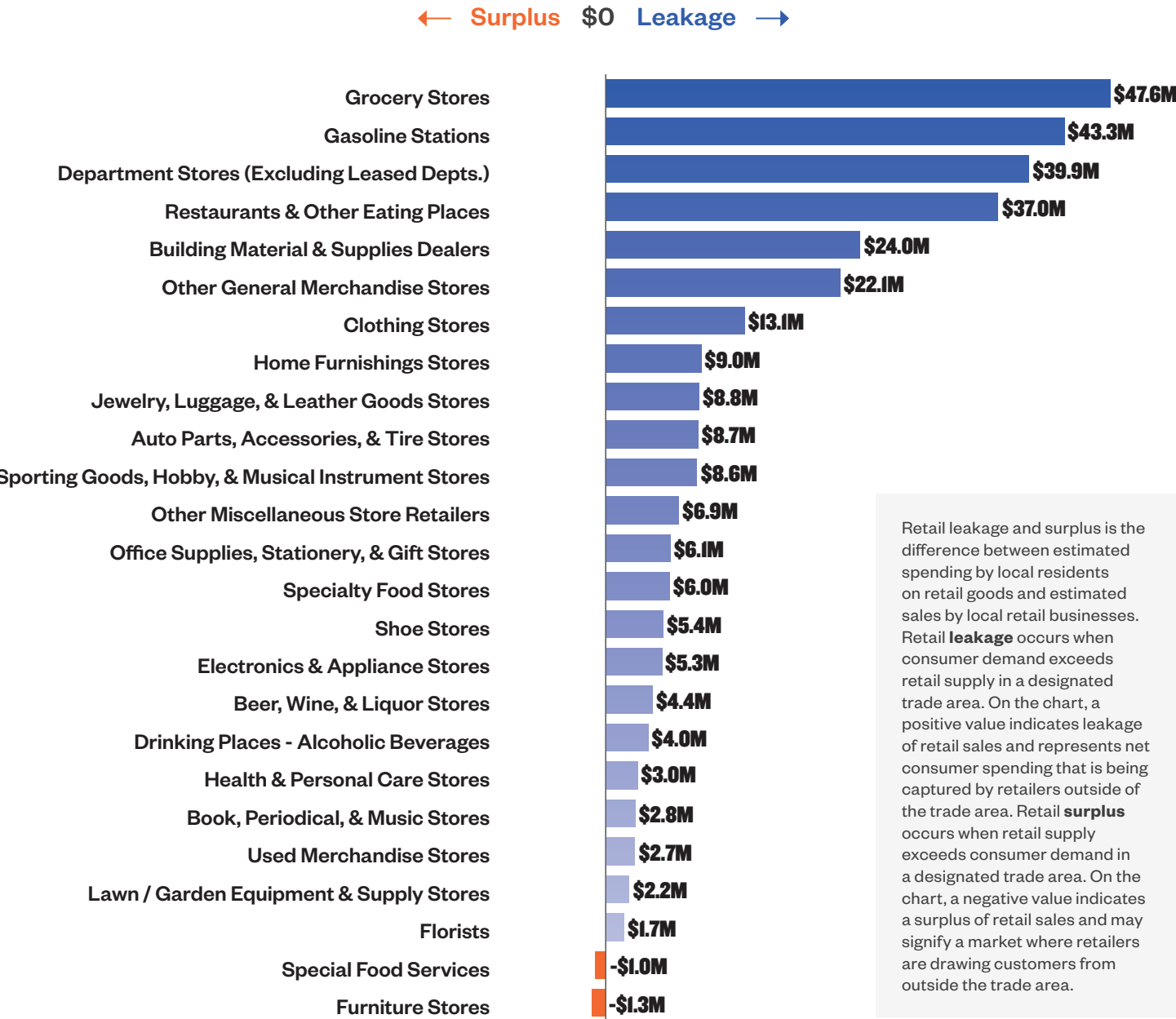
each year in retail sales

Every year,

\$361M

is spent outside the neighborhood

Retail Leakage & Surplus



Source: ESRI and Infogroup, February 2019.

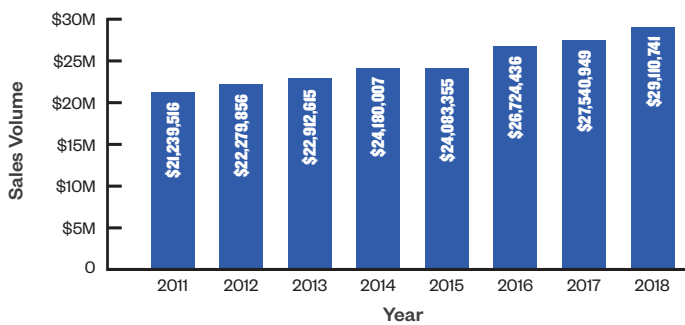
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

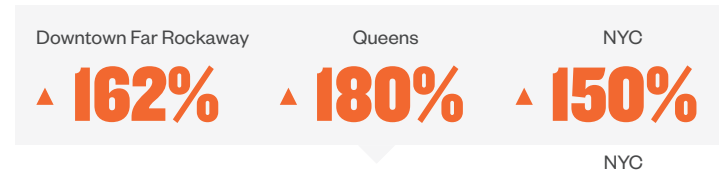
Change in Total Business Sales, 2011-2018



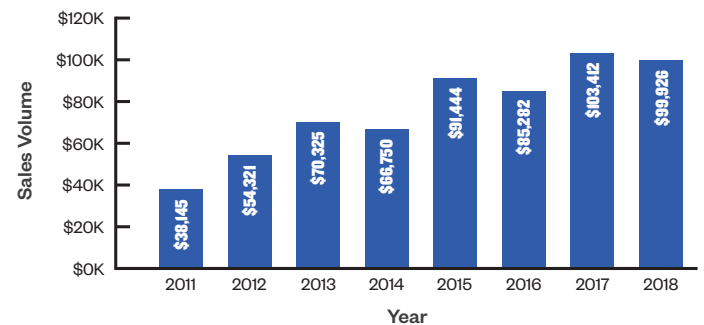
Downtown Far Rockaway Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2011-2018









Downtown Far Rockaway Median Sales by Business



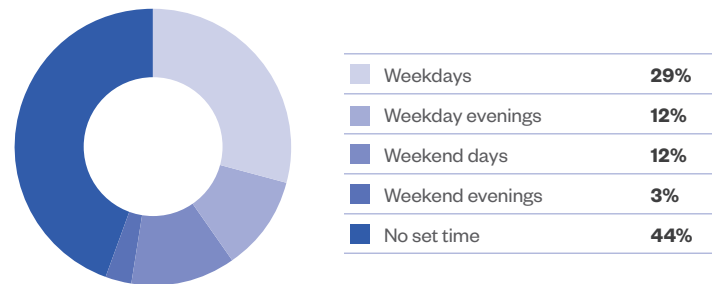
Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

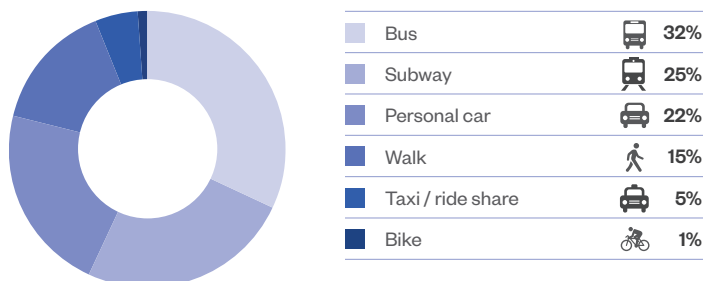
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Downtown Far Rockaway?

- ▶ Department stores 
- ▶ Arts, entertainment & recreational spaces 
- ▶ Quality clothing & shoe stores 
- ▶ Supermarkets & healthy food options 
- ▶ Full-service restaurants 
- ▶ Fitness & health 

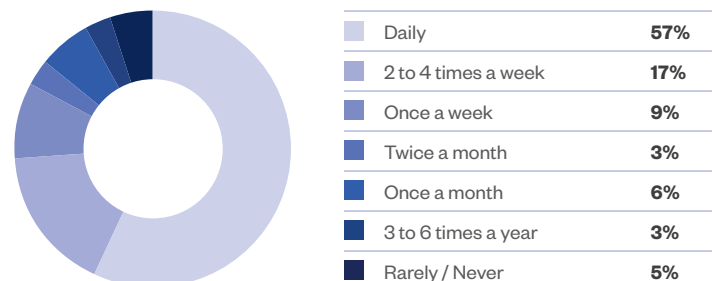
When do you usually shop in Downtown Far Rockaway?



How do you usually get to Downtown Far Rockaway?

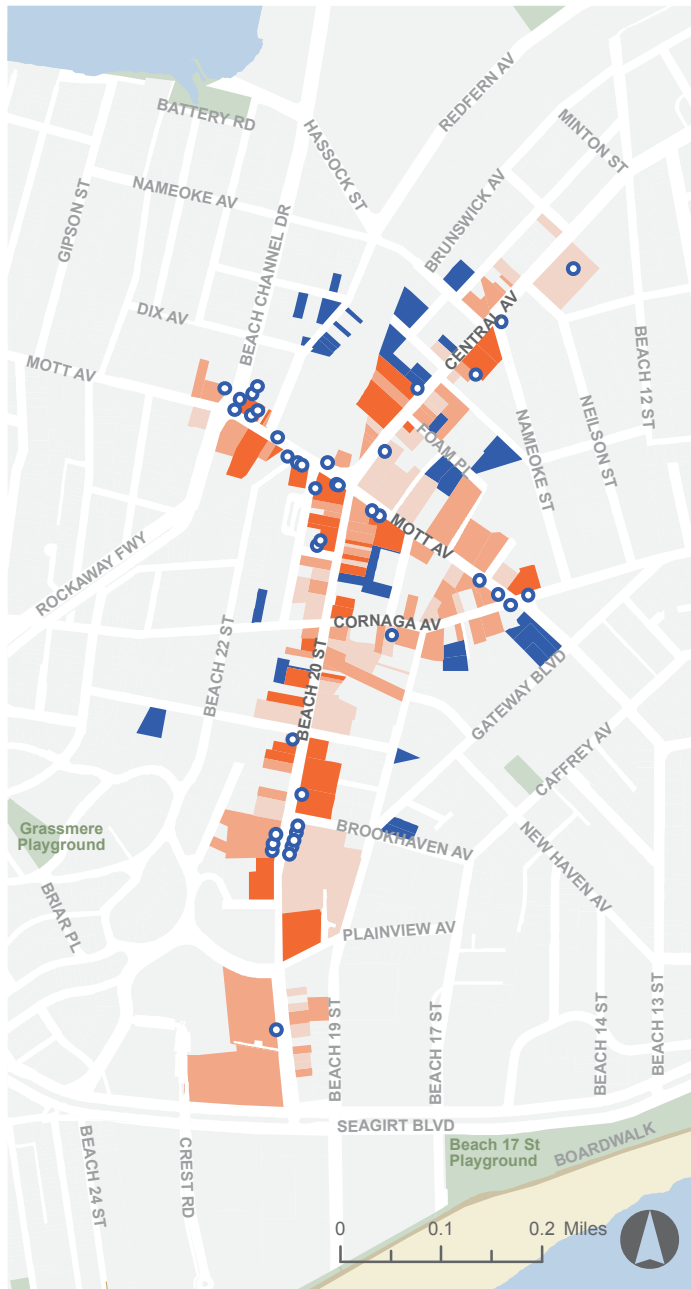


How often do you shop in Downtown Far Rockaway?



Source: Based on 436 consumer surveys conducted by the Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center in Winter 2018.

Storefront Conditions

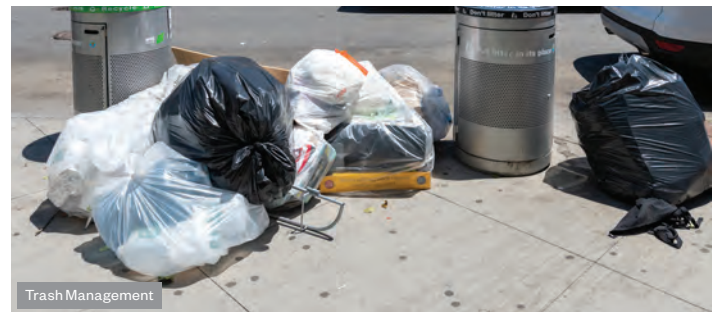


<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <div style="background-color: #f4a460; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Poor Condition (33%) </div> <div> <div style="background-color: #0056b3; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Vacant Lots </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <div style="background-color: #f7941d; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Average Condition (50%) </div> <div> <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Vacant Storefronts </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <div style="background-color: #e67e22; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Good Condition (17%) </div> <div> <div style="background-color: #90d2b0; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Parks & Open Spaces </div> </div>
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An analysis of 342 storefronts along Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Cornaga Avenue and Beach 20th Street revealed that 33% of storefronts are in poor condition, 50% are in average condition, and 17% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Lack of accessibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) throughout the neighborhood, with uneven sidewalks and lack of ramp access at intersections.
- ▶ Corridors lack amenities such as street furniture, artwork and active public spaces.
- ▶ Litter and trash are highly visible around the Mott Avenue A train station and along major intersections around the commercial district despite the presence of litter baskets and supplemental sanitation efforts.
- ▶ Lack of maintenance of existing commercial corridors, open spaces and tree pits contribute to the negative perception of retail quality of the district.
- ▶ Need for pavement markings and street repairs. This is visible throughout the commercial district — sidewalk cracks and absence of traffic signage negatively impact the pedestrian experience and safety.
- ▶ Abundance of vacant lots attracts debris and litter throughout the commercial corridors. Despite efforts to maintain clean sidewalks in front of storefronts, merchants often receive sanitation fines.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Public Space Study: Beach 20th Street Plaza

In 2015, the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) completed a \$1.65M capital project to connect commuters from Beach 22nd and Beach 21st streets to Beach 20th Street, one of four major corridors within the district. The pedestrian plaza area is approximately 9,400 SF and features new lighting, benches, landscaping, a drinking fountain, and moveable outdoor furniture. The Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (RDRC) is DOT's plaza partner and receives maintenance support as part of the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program. The plaza provides space for seasonal events and activities such as concerts, merchant fairs, food courts, games, and exercise that the Downtown Far Rockaway community strongly demands.



What best applies to you?

% Park User Responses

▶ Live in neighborhood	68%
▶ Work in neighborhood	20%
▶ Visiting	2%
▶ Other	10%

How often do you visit this space?

% Park User Responses

▶ Daily	72%
▶ Weekly	16%
▶ Monthly	2%
▶ Rarely	10%

How do you typically use this space?

Commuting / Passing Through	47%
Eating	23%
Shopping	15%
Socializing / Meeting Friends	13%
Playing Games / Sports	2%

How did you get here?

Walk	43%
Bus	34%
Train / Subway	16%
Other	5%
Private Car	2%

How much time do you typically spend here?

▶ Walking through	36%
▶ Less than 15 minutes	10%
▶ Less than 30 minutes	24%
▶ Less than 1 hour	6%
▶ 1-2 hours	16%
▶ 2 or more hours	8%

When visiting Beach 20th Street Plaza, do you shop at nearby businesses?

73%	27%
Yes	No

Source: Based on 50 public space surveys conducted by RYTF in Spring 2019.

Public Space Study: Beach 20th Street Plaza



RDRC Youth Volunteer To Spruce Up Beach 20th Street

On the scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate your level of satisfaction with:

► Cleanliness	2
► Lighting	4
► Attractiveness	2
► Accessibility	4
► Overall safety	3
► Physical conditions / amenities	2
► Programs / events	2

What changes or improvements would you like to see in this space?

► Cleanliness and upkeep	35%
► Street furniture	24%
► Safety	22%
► Activities, programs, and events	19%

What are the top three things you like best about the space?

- Accessibility
- Location
- Seating options



Downtown Far Rockaway Annual Lights of Hope Tree Lighting Ceremony

Source: Based on 50 public space user surveys conducted by RYTF in Spring 2019

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

<p>■ Assessed Commercial Corridors</p> <p>Primary data on Downtown Far Rockaway storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-8 was gathered along Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Cornaga Avenue, and Beach 20th Street.</p>	<p>— Downtown Far Rockaway Context Area</p> <p>Demographic and employment data on pg. 16-17 correspond to the Downtown Far Rockaway neighborhood context area.</p>	<p>... Trade Area</p> <p>Retail leakage, surplus, and retail opportunity data on pg. 11 correspond to the 0.75 mile trade area.</p>
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Area Demographics

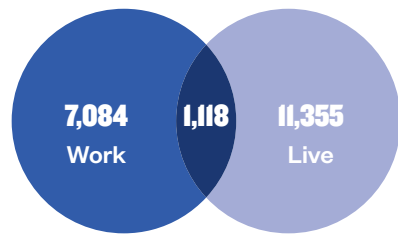
Total Population	
42,406	Downtown Far Rockaway
2,310,011	Queens
8,461,961	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)	
32,152	Downtown Far Rockaway
21,150	Queens
27,986	New York City

Average Household Size	
3.36	Downtown Far Rockaway
2.93	Queens
2.65	New York City

Car Ownership	
62%	Downtown Far Rockaway
63%	Queens
45%	New York City

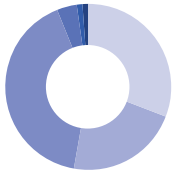
Commuting Patterns



7,084	Work in Downtown Far Rockaway, live elsewhere
1,118	Live & Work in Downtown Far Rockaway
11,355	Live in Downtown Far Rockaway, work elsewhere

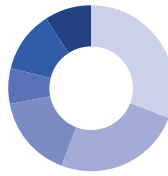
Area Demographics

Race / Background



	Downtown Far Rockaway	QN	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	31%	28%	29%
White alone	22%	26%	32%
Black or African American alone	41%	17%	22%
Asian alone	4%	25%	14%
Two or more races	1%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	1%	2%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Downtown Far Rockaway	QN	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	31%	19%	19%
High School Graduate	25%	27%	24%
Some College, No Degree	16%	15%	14%
Associate's Degree	7%	8%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	12%	20%	21%
Graduate or Professional Degree	9%	11%	15%

Population Age



	Downtown Far Rockaway	QN	NYC
Under 5 Years	11%	6%	6%
5-14 Years	16%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	15%	12%	13%
25-44 Years	25%	31%	32%
45-64 Years	22%	26%	25%
65+ Years	11%	14%	13%

Median Age

32	Downtown Far Rockaway
37.9	Queens
35.9	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

32%	Downtown Far Rockaway
48%	Queens
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$46,230	Downtown Far Rockaway
\$59,758	Queens
\$55,191	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

20%	Downtown Far Rockaway
15%	Queens
20%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

60%	Downtown Far Rockaway
64%	Queens
64%	New York City

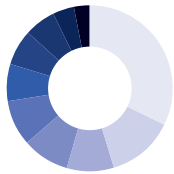
Unemployment*

8.1%	Downtown Far Rockaway
7.8%	Queens
8.6%	New York City

Note: Unemployment figures are based on data from 2012-2016. As of December 2018, the unemployment rate is 3.4% for Queens and 3.9% for New York City (NYS DOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Downtown Far Rockaway is not available.

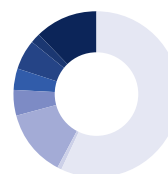
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	33%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	13%
Other Services	9%
Retail Trade	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	9%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%
Construction	6%
Public Administration	4%
Manufacturing	3%

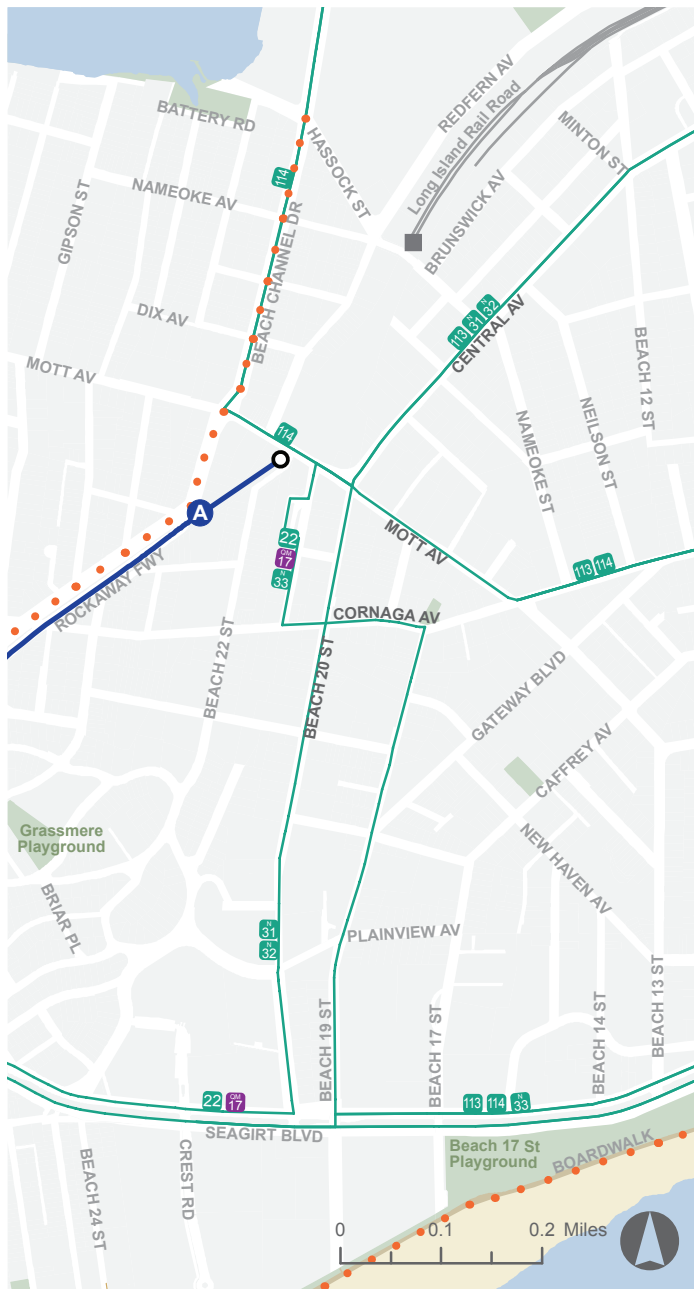
Jobs Located in Downtown Far Rockaway



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	57%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1%
Other Services	13%
Retail Trade	5%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	0%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6%
Construction	2%
Public Administration	12%
Manufacturing	0%

DATA APPENDIX

Downtown Far Rockaway Transportation



▲ Downtown Far Rockaway Transportation

— Bus Routes
 — NYC Subway
 ... Bicycle Lanes
 — Long Island Rail Road

Vehicular Traffic (2015)

22,187	Seagirt Boulevard from Rockaway Parkway to Beach 9th Street
11,001	Central Avenue from Doughty Boulevard to Mott Avenue
10,567	Beach Channel Drive from Beach 75th Street to Mott Avenue
10,126	Mott Avenue from Bay 24th Street to Beach 13th Street
5,898	Beach 20th Street from Seagirt Boulevard to Mott Avenue

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2017)

1,472,005	A Far Rockaway-Mott Avenue Station
582,975	A Beach 25th Street Station
298,395	A Beach 36th Street Station

MTA Annual Bus Ridership (2017)

92,231	Q117
1.2M	Q113
2.0M	Q114
2.1M	Q22

Bus Routes

4	MTA Bus Routes
3	Nassau Inter-County Express Bus Routes N31, N32, N33

Sources: MTA 2017; NYC DOT September, 2017; NYS DOT, 2015 Annual Average Daily Traffic data.

Recent SBS Investments in the Neighborhood

- ▶ *Facade Improvement*, Storefront Improvement Program grant of \$30,000 awarded to the Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, 2017.
- ▶ *Storefront Improvements*, NYC Department of Small Business Services awarded more than \$140,000 in storefront improvement grants (privately funded by NYCEDC and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City) to 18 storefronts in Downtown Far Rockaway, 2017.
- ▶ *Capacity Building*, Avenue NYC capacity building grant of \$25,000 awarded to the Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, 2016.
- ▶ *Business Attraction - Mott Avenue and Beach 20th Street*, Avenue NYC business attraction grant of \$30,000 awarded to the Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, 2015.
- ▶ *Business Attraction*, Avenue NYC grant of \$50,000 awarded to the Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, 2014.
- ▶ *Business Vacancy Database*, Avenue NYC business attraction grant of \$40,000 awarded to the Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation, 2014.

Existing Plans & Studies

Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action

- ▶ In November 2015, Council Member Donovan Richards convened community stakeholders as the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group, in partnership with the Mayor's Office and multiple City agencies. The Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action was developed as a comprehensive response to address some of the strategies outlined by the working group. In 2017, Downtown Far Rockaway was rezoned to bolster a vibrant mixed-use income center in the downtown area. Investments as part of the Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action will bring an estimate of \$288 million in capital investments, allowing for major infrastructure upgrades. Projects will be designed to address community needs pertaining to affordable housing, open space, community resources, and economic and workforce development. To learn more: nycedc.com/project/downtown-far-rockaway

Far Rockaway Library

- ▶ At 18,000 square feet, the new building will be twice the size of the original library at 1637 Central Avenue and is scheduled to be completed by mid-2021. Programming will include after-school study hours, story reading, and various community events. The renovated branch will feature a Teen Room and a Cyber Center, along with library offices, separate adult and children reading areas, a meeting room, and a Small Business Center. The entire structure will be ADA compliant. There will also be a rear yard with plantings accessible to the public.

Sources

ESRI and Infogroup, Inc. 2019 ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority. 2017. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Annual Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. December 2018. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2016 Annual Average Daily Traffic, using Traffic Data Viewer.

NYC Department of Finance, Division of Tax Policy, using data from NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. Business sales are reported by tax year, which runs from March 1st to February 28th. Sales data are compiled from sales tax returns, which are rolled up by tax filer within a year, excluding returns with negative sales amounts. For each year, each tax filer is reported according to the address listed on their latest return. Large outliers were removed from the analysis, and the top 5% of filers from Manhattan and the top 1% of filers from the outer boroughs by sales were removed.

NYC Department of Small Business Services. Fiscal Year 2018. Business Improvement District Trends Report.

NYC Department of Transportation. September 2017. Bi-Annual Pedestrian Counts.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2015. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2016 American Community Survey 4-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. Downtown Far Rockaway Census Tracts: 1032.01, 1032.02, 1008.02, 1010.01, 998.01

Photo Credits: NYC Economic Development Corporation; NYC SBS; Jose Trucios; Rockaway East Merchants Association; Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation.

Beach 21st Street Plaza

- ▶ Accessible public plaza — with public art, seating and planted areas to manage storm water — flanked by retail and commercial space. To be completed by early 2020.

Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan

- ▶ Introduced in March 2011, this comprehensive waterfront plan features: a three-year action agenda comprising 130 funded projects, including the development of more than 50 acres of new waterfront parks, 14 new waterfront esplanades, and the introduction of a new commuter ferry service (the NYC Ferry), providing a framework for the City's 520 miles (840 km) of shoreline for the next decade and beyond.

HPD Housing Developments

- ▶ The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and Council Member Donovan Richards plan to deliver more than 800 units of affordable housing, 100,000 square feet of retail space, and 30,000 square feet of community space across three projects located in the neighborhood's core as part of the Neighborhood Rezoning.



ABOUT SBS

The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to recognize and thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the development of the Downtown Far Rockaway Commercial District Needs Assessment:

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz
NYC Council Member Donovan Richards
Queens Community Board 14
Downtown Far Rockaway Merchants
Downtown Far Rockaway Shoppers and Residents

The Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program 2017



Guidelines & Application

About RDRC

Established in 1978, Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (RDRC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for profit corporation. Our mission is *“to promote the revitalization of the Rockaways neighborhoods and economic base, and to secure an improved quality of life for its residents”*. To assist local businesses, RDRC is engaged in a number of activities (e.g. *business attraction, district marketing, merchant organizing*) to strengthen the downtown Far Rockaway business district. In addition to managing the Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program, RDRC is playing a crucial role in re-establishing the Rockaway East Merchants Association, activating the Beach 20th Street Pedestrian Plaza with activities and events, and as a leading community partner in the planned \$91 million in capital improvements designated for downtown Far Rockaway.

Introduction

The Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program Round II is open to existing businesses as well as businesses seeking to relocate into downtown Far Rockaway. The grant provides a 75% match of funds up to \$10,000 per storefront to help local businesses and property owners complete storefront renovation projects.



Tino's Unisex Hair Styling and Park's Clothing Corp. represent two examples of storefronts with wider frontage that participated in Round I of the Downtown Far Rockaway Storefront Improvement Program.

Program Goals

The goals of the program are to:

- Revitalize building facades using NYC Small Business Services best practices in storefront design;
- Improve the commercial corridor and establish a distinct character of the downtown Far Rockaway district;
- Allow longstanding businesses to stay competitive and keep pace with neighborhood change;
- Attract new and diverse businesses into downtown Far Rockaway; and
- Create a stronger, safer neighborhood that attracts local residents and shoppers.

Applicants should consider properly sized awnings and signage, inviting lighting, transparent windows, preserved architectural details, removal of security gates and adherence to local building codes in their vision for an improved storefront. The general guide principle of excellent storefront design is to keep it simple and to let the natural architectural elements of buildings and storefronts speak clearly. Applicants in need of complete storefront restorations as well as smaller replacement or repair work are encouraged to apply.

Eligible Applicants

To be considered for the program applicants must:

1. Must be located in downtown Far Rockaway;
2. Employ fewer than 100 individuals in all locations (property owners wishing to receive funds must own properties that house businesses that meet this criteria);
3. Secure funding equal to 25% of the total cost of improvements.

Eligible Improvements

- ✓ New signage and awnings
- ✓ Masonry work and brick pointing
- ✓ Installation of open-grill security gates
- ✓ Storefront framing and glass repair/replacement
- ✓ Exterior lighting and/or exterior painting
- ✓ Improvements to improve accessibility and compliance w/ building codes
- ✓ Other approved exterior improvements

Selection Criteria

A selection committee will evaluate each application based on the following criteria:

- **Impact** – Storefronts adjacent to each other in order to achieve the maximum visual impact throughout the corridor
- **Capacity** – Applicants that can demonstrate they have secured the 25% match requirement of the total project cost.
- **Need** – Storefronts in disrepair or in poor to moderate condition as documented by photographs and drawings.
- **Project Vision** – Commitment to improvements that adhere to local building codes and follow best practices in storefront design as outlined in the ***NYC Small Business Services Façade Guide to Storefront Design***.



SIP Round I
grantees:
Eazy Locks &
Building
Supplies,
Platinum Plus
and Jontue
Discount
Boutique

Funding Structure

Selected applicants will receive 75% in matching funds, with a maximum reimbursable amount (MRA) up to \$10,000 per storefront. Payments will be disbursed as follows:

- Payment 1 – 50% of MRA at grant execution
- Payment 2 – 50% of MRA upon project completion

Application Process

STEP 1 - Application Submission

Applicant submits complete application with photographs, drawings and signed statement of support to: info@rdrc.org, by fax to 718.327.4990, or hand delivery to:

RDRC, Inc.
1920 Mott Avenue, 2nd Floor
Far Rockaway, NY 11691
Attention: Storefront Improvement Program

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis with a final deadline of _____, 2017.

STEP 2 – Application Review

1. Selection committee reviews applicant eligibility and evaluates application based on Impact, Capacity, Need and Project Vision to determine finalist.
2. Finalists will be invited to host a site selection committee to determine the scope of improvements.
3. Non-finalists will be added to a waiting list to be reconsidered at a later date pending availability of program funds.